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Die Verwaltung im Achämenidenreich

Administration in the Achaemenid Empire

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Die Verwaltung im Achämenidenreich

Imperiale Muster und Strukturen

Administration in the Achaemenid Empire

Tracing the Imperial Signature

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und altorientalischer Überlieferungen«
aus Anlass der 80-Jahr-Feier der Entdeckung
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Bactria and Egypt.
Administration as mirrored in the Aramaic sources

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I would like to address one particular aspect of the Achaemenid administration: the Official Aramaic letters issued from the satrapal offices at Susa and/or Babylon (Arsames correspondence[1]) and Bactra (Akhvamazda letters). I will discuss some aspects of their epistolary conventions, as well as the officials involved in the production of official letters and compare the letters connected to Arsames, satrap of Egypt in the late fifth century BCE, with the recently published Aramaic letters of Akhvamazda, satrap of Bactria from the middle of the fourth century BCE. This thrilling material provides scholars with an enormous amount of new information, enough for many publications in the years to come. The following should be considered a preliminary contribution to the study of these important texts.

2. The letters of Akhvamazda, satrap of Bactria

Having been awaited for a long time, these texts were finally published in 2012 by Naveh and Shaked under the title *Aramaic Documents from Ancient Bactria from the Khalili Collections* (also known as the Khalili documents). Unfortunately Joseph Naveh did not live to witness the scholarly reception of this elegantly edited piece of work.

The volume contains thirty Aramaic documents on parchment of various nature (categories A–C) as well as eighteen inscribed wooden sticks (D1–18), all of which are of unknown provenance, but can be categorized as administrative texts. Among the documents on parchment are official letters, lists of supplies, lists of names and notes. All the texts are linked by the editors to the satrapy of Bactria in the late Achaemenid period and the beginning of

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Abbreviations used: *TAD* A – Porten / Yardeni 1986. Documents indicated by A, B, C and D (as in, e.g., A4) are published in Naveh / Shaked 2012 (A = documents relating to Bagavant; B = other letters; C = lists of supplies and labels; D = tallies).

1 The Arsames letter found at Elephantine (*TAD* A6.2) probably comes from the satrapal offices at Memphis.

the reign of Alexander the Great (the latest document, C4, is dateable to his seventh year, 324 BCE) and most of the documents are believed to belong to a single archive.[2] Among the texts on parchment there are seventeen letters which belong to the fourth century (A1–8; B1–9). Eight of these letters, sent by Akhvamazda (A1-8), lend themselves to comparison with the letters by Arsames, satrap of Egypt in the late fifth century. Letters B1–9 represent a different group of letters. Their correspondents address each other in a different manner.[3] One letter (B10) is dated by the editors on the basis of its handwriting in the first half of the fifth century. I will discuss letters B1–9 in relation to letters A1–8. The main focus of this paper, however, will be letters A1–8.

2.1. Letters A1–8

Letters A1-6 are addressed to a person named Bagavant, the governor (*pḥt'*) in *ḥlmy* according to one letter (A2:8).[4] The letters were sent by a certain Akhvamazda, whose position is not indicated in the letters. Naveh and Shaked assume that Akhvamazda was the satrap of Bactria (including Sogdiana) in the middle of the fourth century.[5] They base this on the epistolary style of the letters (which suggests that Akhvamazda was of a higher rank than Bagavant) and places and activities to which the letters refer. As said, the letters indicate that Bagavant was based in *ḥlmy*, Khulmi, a place in Bactria, near modern-day Khulm. If Akhvamazda was indeed Bagavant's superior, he may have held the position of satrap of this province during the reign of Artaxerxes III (unfortunately he is not known as a satrap from other sources[6]). The natural place for the site of the satrap's residency would have been Bactria's capital, Bactra (Aramaic *bḥtry*), today Balkh, at a distance of 80 km west of Khulmi or nearby the fortress Zariaspa.[7] Bactra is mentioned several times in the texts.[8] Another important site mentioned in the texts is

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2   Naveh / Shaked 2012, 16. On p. 18, however, the editors indicate that it cannot be established with certainty for every individual document that it stems from the same, single archive in Bactra.

3   The epistolary style of B1–9 is not discussed in Naveh / Shaked. See Naveh / Shaked 2012, 37–39.

4   *pḥt'* 'the governor' is the singular emphatic form of an assumed absolute *pḥh*. See Hoftijzer / Jongeling 1995, 904 s.v. *pḥh*.

5   There are two additional documents in which Bagavant is mentioned (A9–A10). On this see also below, n.14.

6   See Naveh / Shaked 2012, 17.

7   Naveh / Shaked 2012, 17.

8   See Naveh / Shaked 2012, 18. A gentilic *bḥtry* 'Bactrian' is also found in a fragmentary legal document from Elephantine published by Hoftijzer in 1988. A cer-

Nikhshapaya (today Karshi), in Sogdiana, approximately 300 km northwest of Khulmi. At the time Sogdiana and Bactria probably formed one satrapy.[9] The building instructions concerning Nikhshapaya (a wall [A4–5] and a ditch [A4]), which Bagavant receives from Akhvamazda, are suggestive of some kind of fortification around this town.[10] These, and other places mentioned in the documents, give an idea both of the size of the area under the authority of Bagavant, and of Akhvamazda's domains therein (300 km from Khulmi in various directions).[11]

The letters concern several aspects of the management of the area under governor Bagavant's control, such as the management and maintenance of (satrapal) property and the construction of fortifications.[12]

Four letters bear dates between 353 and 348 (A1–4), and it it is assumed that A5–8 come from approximately the same period. Letters A5–6 are clearly connected to A1–4,[13] since the names of the addressee and the sender are the same. Despite the fact that A7–8 do not contain the names of the addressee and the sender, they are almost certainly connected to A1–6 as well.

According to Naveh and Shaked, the letters by Akhvamazda do not come from the archive of the addressee, Bagavant, governor in Khulmi. They suggest that the letters probably come from Akhvamazda's chancellery, arguing that the documents contain many of the indications of draft versions: they are palimpsests (with clear traces of earlier writing) and contain erasures, corrections and cases of negligent spelling and negligent use of language.

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tain [*b*]*rznrw br 'rtbrzn hw ptw bḥtry* '[Ba]rznarava son of Artabarzana, that is Patou, a Bactrian' is mentioned in the document as one of the contract partners (*TAD* D2.12). The text further specifies that he was stationed at Elephantine (*dy 'trh byb byrt'* 'whose place is in Elephantine the fortress') and that he was 'added to the detachment of Marya' (*'byd ldgl mry*). The text is dated to the second year of Artaxerxes (403). This text has perhaps escaped the notice of the editors. It is certainly of relevance for it witnesses to the mobility of Bactrians of the late fifth century in the western parts of the realm and demonstrates that there were contacts between Bactrian individual(s) and Judeans / Aramaic speaking communities (cf. §9).

9 Briant 2002, 746.

10 Naveh and Shaked suggest that the fortification was intended to protect the place against incursions from Scythian tribes in the North (Naveh / Shaked 2012, 17). On other place names in the Khalili documents, see Naveh / Shaked 2012, 18–22.

11 Naveh / Shaked 2012, 21–22.

12 For a description of the tasks of the *pḥt'*, see Fried 2013 (in particular her conclusions on p. 329).

13 Naveh / Shaked 2012, 16.

They cannot therefore be the letters that were actually sent to Bagavant.[14] According to the editors, it is very possible that these 'prototypes' were preserved in Akhvamazda's chancellery as 'records of outgoing mail', whereas improved versions were sent to the addressees.[15] This practice is reminiscent of the so-called draft versions concerning the rebuilding of the Jewish temple at Elephantine (*TAD* A4.7–4.8, and possibly 4.5). Since the writing is such an important part of the editors' reconstruction, it is unfortunate that their volume lacks a palaeographic study, but this may be a consequence of Joseph Naveh's passing.

3. The letters by Arsames, satrap of Egypt

The eight letters sent by Akhvamazda (A1–8) lend themselves to comparison with the letters by Arsames, satrap of Egypt. The thirteen Arsames letters published in 1957 by Driver, were recovered from an unknown place in Egypt and are dateable to the late fifth century (*TAD* A6.1–A6.15).[16] Just like the Akhvamazda letters, the Arsames letters were written on parchment, but unlike the Akhvamazda letters, the Arsames letters are not palimpsests. And where Akhvamazda is not known from other sources to have been the satrap of Bactria, Arsames is attested as satrap under Darius II from other sources as well: not just in the famous Aramaic papyri from Elephantine concerning the rebuilding of the Jewish temple there (*TAD* A4.5; 4.7–4.9), but also in two letters from the same archive in which he is referred to (*TAD* A4.1 and A4.2).

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14   During the Castelen conference, André Lemaire rightly indicated a complicating factor: the name Bagavant is also found in two other documents, namely A9 (a record of some kind of good [*sm'*] that Bagavant took from his wife) and A10 (a record of a debt, in which Bagavant probably acts as the debtor). According to Lemaire, the documents A1–10 must therefore come from Bagavant's archive. However, Naveh and Shaked's arguments against this hypothesis are compelling: (1) we would expect more than one sender in Bagavant's archive (cf. also the Arsames correspondence); (2) the documents are not finalized letters (cf. above; Naveh / Shaked 2012, 16–17). For the time being, I am inclined to agree with Naveh and Shaked that the texts are drafts or prototypes. A remarkable feature of these drafts is that they contain external data (see §6.5), to the extent that room was reserved for the sealing (in the external address).

15   Naveh / Shaked 2012, 16–17. A similar scenario has also been suggested by Henkelman for Aramaic letter orders which possibly underlie Elamite letter orders with long colophons in the Persepolis Fortification archive. According to Henkelman's reconstruction, the original Aramaic orders were kept in the archives of the director's office, whereas the Elamite document (a translation of the Aramaic prototype) was sent to the addressee (Henkelman 2008, 153).

16   Driver 1965.

He is also known from Babylonian (the Murashu archive, in particular) and Demotic sources, from a problematic Old Persian source and from the works of the Greek authors Ctesias and Polyaenus.[17]

The Arsames letters deal with the administration of Arsames' private estates in Egypt by his officers (*pqdyn*[18]) Aḥḥapi (*TAD* A6.3–4), Psamshek (*TAD* A6.3–8) and Nakhthor (*TAD* A6.9–16).

The Arsames letters can be divided into several subgroups. First, not all the letters were sent by Arsames himself. He is the sender of eleven letters (*TAD* A6.3–6.13), whereas three other letters were sent by persons other than himself (*TAD* A6.14–6.16). Among the letters sent by Arsames, further distinctions can be made between those that are addressed to Artahant (*TAD* A6.3–6.5; 6.7; in *TAD* A6.5 spelled *'rtwnt*) and those that are addressed to Arsames' *pqydn*. The letters to Artahant differ from those addressed to his *pqydn*. Artahant apparently was a high-ranking person. Requests made in the letters to him are formulated in the jussive, which is the form *par excellence* for the expression of politer requests. The letters to his *pqydn* take a completely different form and tone. Imperatives, warnings and reprimands predominate.

4. Letter orders

The letters sent by Arsames to his *pqdyn* are often compared with Akkadian and Elamite letter orders. The latter are known from the Persepolis Fortification archive in particular and the administrative background of these letter orders has been discussed in detail by Henkelman.[19] According to him, the Elamite letter orders issued from the central authorities in Persepolis and were addressed to local officials. Alongside delivery orders they form a category of so-called prescriptive orders. The colophons of these letter orders mention the official who transmitted the order (the 'relator') and the scribe who wrote the preserved Elamite document. The original orders were possibly written in Aramaic.[20] Henkelman argues that the use of an original Aramaic text or draft was not the common practice in the bureaucracy underlying the

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17 On relevant sources in languages other than Aramaic, see Tuplin 2013. See also Kuhrt 2010, chapter 8, nos. 9 and 20 (Ctesias, *Persica*) and chapter 16, no. 69 (Babylonian tablet).

18 *pqyd* (sg.) 'officer, magistrate', literally 'someone entrusted [with a specific task]'; related to *pqd* 'to command, to entrust'; see Hoftijzer / Jongeling 1995, 932.

19 On the limited corpus of Elamite letter orders among the Persepolis Fortification tablets, see Henkelman 2008, chapter 2, and *idem* 2011, 99–100. On Neo-Babylonian letter orders, see Frahm / Jursa 2011, 4.

20 Henkelman 2011, 100; Stolper 1989, 305f. with n.20.

Persepolis Fortification archive: in almost all cases, texts were written directly in Elamite.[21] Only the offices of the director (Parnakka) and deputy-director (Ziššawiš), to which these letter orders belong, had an Aramaic administrative staff at their disposal.

Tavernier has compared the colophons of the Elamite letter orders with the Arsames letter orders and reconstructed their administrative procedures.[22] He concludes that the *b'l ṭ'm* in the Aramaic letter orders was the person who transmitted the oral instructions given in Persian (or in Aramaic). The *spr* translated these instructions into Aramaic and made a draft. Finally a scribe – unnamed by the letter orders – wrote the document.[23]

As will be demonstrated in what follows, not just the Arsames letters, but the Akhvamazda letters A1–8 too, may be counted as letter orders. The latter share with the Arsames letter orders not only the colophon, but also the blunt imperative form of orders and a lack of well-wishes.

5. Differences between the Akhvamazda and the Arsames correspondences

Even though the points of agreement between the two correspondences are numerous, their differences should not be underestimated. The most important of these are of a chronological and geographical nature, and the following should be taken into account:

– The Arsames letters were written towards the end of the fifth century, whereas the Akhvamazda letters were written over half a century later;
– The Arsames letters on parchment were probably written in Babylon / Susa and the Akhvamazda letters in Bactra. Even though we may assume that the official language which issued from the Achaemenid chancelleries was more or less uniform in character, the existence of local differences cannot be excluded. The question is to what extent differences in place, time, and historical circumstances influenced the Aramaic language, as well as the epistolary style of the two groups of letters;

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21 According to Henkelman in ca. 95% of the cases (Henkelman 2011, 100, n. 24). Henkelman dismisses an earlier theory of Vallat's that all Elamite tablets are copies of Aramaic originals, produced only for the sake of the internal bureaucracy at Persepolis (*ibid.* n. 23; see also *idem* 2008, 140–2).
22 Tavernier 2008, 64–74. See also Henkelman 2008, 147–13 and Tavernier, this volume.
23 Tavernier 2008, 71. The Elamite terms are not reproduced here. On them, see Tavernier, this volume.

– The Arsames letters written in Babylon or Susa are addressed to officials in the satrapy of Egypt and had a long way to go. The Akhvamazda letters were written in the capital of the satrapy of Bactria / Sogdiana and are addressed to a governor residing in a provincial centre located within the same satrapy;

– Last but not least, the Arsames letters were finalized, whereas the Akhvamazda letters are probably drafts.

6. Comparative aspects of the Akhvamazda and Arsames correspondences

6.1. Internal address (tables 1 and 6)

The address formula *mn* PN$_1$ *'l* PN$_2$ 'from PN$_1$ to PN$_2$' is characteristic of the internal address of the Akhvamazda letters. In this formula, the sender is mentioned first (*mn* PN$_1$) and the addressee second ('to PN$_2$').[24] The address formula features the Aramaic preposition *'l* instead of *'l*. The latter, frequent in Old Aramaic, was pushed out by *'l* in Official Aramaic, taking over its directional meaning. This phenomenon is visible in texts from the late sixth century onwards and is counted as one of the hallmarks of Official Aramaic.[25]

The Akhvamazda letters were all sent by Akhvamazda (*mn 'ḥmzd* 'from Akhvamazda', A1–6) and all of them are addressed to Bagavant (*'l bgwnt* 'to Bagavant', A1–6).[26] In letters A1 and A5, Bagavant is mentioned as the first person in a longer address (A1, *'l bgwnt wdyny'* 'to Bagavant and the judges'; A5:1, *'l bgwnt wḥšwhšt w'zdyp* 'to Bagavant, Vakhshuvahishta and Azdayapa'). Naveh and Shaked assume that the Akhvamazda letters were sent by a superior (Akhvamazda) to his subordinate Bagavant (see §2.1 above).[27]

Additional evidence can be gleaned from the palimpsest text of A2. This letter is addressed to Daizaka (referred to as a *spr* in the letter to Bagavant written over it [l.7; see §6.4.2]). The palimpsest text also places the addressee (*'l dyzk*) second; the sender Khvardushta is found in first position (*ḥrdwšt*; the preposition *mn* is damaged). The letter is very fragmentary, but the wish for the other's well-being may hint at the correspondents' equal status (cf. n.30).

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24 Previously, the existence of the formula in this remote part of the empire was hypothesized on the basis of the occurrence of Aramaic ideograms in Parthian and Sogdian letters (see Folmer 1995, 626 n. 147).

25 Folmer 1995, 756. On *'l* in the external address of letters, see below §6.5.1c.

26 There is no information from A7–8 on this point.

27 This is unclear in the case of A7–8.

The formula *mn* PN$_1$ *'l* PN$_2$ is also found in letters B1–9. Letter B2 has the only complete address: *mn bgyš 'l whwš* 'from Bagaicha to Vahucha'. In this letter, the relative status of the correspondents cannot be ascertained, but the equal status of the correspondents can be deduced, in a number of cases, from the use of *'ḥy* 'my brother' preceding the PN.[28] The absence of this formula in B5 may indicate that this is the only letter sent to a superior.[29]

The address formula *mn* PN$_1$ *'l* PN$_2$ lacks any specific qualification positioning the sender in relation to the addressee. Letters B1–9, however, demonstrate clearly that it was possible to apply such a qualification to this letter formula too. Whether this was a relatively late or local development, cannot be ascertained.

The address formula in the Akhvamazda letters and in letters B1-9 lends itself to comparison with the Arsames letters, where the formula *mn* PN$_1$ *'l* PN$_2$ is also found. The relative order of the sender and addressee and the use of the prepositions is exactly the same in these letters. The use of the formula in the Arsames correspondence, however, is more complicated to judge, for not all the letters were sent by Arsames, and persons of various status are addressed in them. In the Akhvamazda letters, Akhvamazda is always the sender and Bagavant is always the addressee.

In the Arsames letters on parchment and in the one written on papyrus (*TAD* A6.2), the sender of the letter is introduced by *mn* and mentioned first (on *TAD* A6.1, see below). Most of the parchment letters were sent by Arsames himself (*TAD* A6.3−6.13), three letters were sent by other officials (*TAD* A6.14 Varuvahya; *TAD* A6.15 Varfish; *TAD* A6.16 Artaḥaya). The addressee of the Arsames letters is introduced by *'l* and is positioned second in these letters. In many cases, it is clear that letters from a superior to a subordinate are being dealt with (*TAD* A6.9−6.12 letters by Arsames to his *pqydn*; *TAD* A6.8 letter of Arsames to Armapiya; *TAD* A6.14 letter of Varuvahya to Nakhthor; *TAD* A6.15 letter of Varfish to Nakhthor). In one of the letters, however, the correspondents may be of equal status (*TAD* A6.16 'from Artaḥaya to Nakhthor')

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28   *mn* PN] *'l 'ḥy* PN (B1); *mn* PN [(B3); *mn* PN *'l '*[*ḥy*] PN (B4); *mn* PN *'l*] *'ḥy* PN (B6). The word *'ḥy* is also found in the external address of B1 and B3 (see §6.5.1a) and in the palimpsest of B1 (*mn*] PN *'l 'ḥy* PN). In Neo-Babylonian letters 'my brother' is also used in letters addressed to inferiors. See Frahm / Jursa 2011, 7.

29   The beginning of the address is reconstructed by the editors as *'l mr*]*'y* (Naveh / Shaked 2012, 158). I have left this doubtful reading out of consideration. *'ḥy* is frequently used in the formula *'l* PN$_1$ PN$_2$ (cf. below).

and in several others, the addressee is of relatively high status (Artavant; *TAD* A6.3–6.7).[30]

The address formula in the Akhvamazda and Arsames letters is different from the address formula *'l* PN_1 PN_2 'to PN_1 (from) PN_2'. This type of address formula, characterized by the addressee preceding the sender,[31] is very frequent in papyrus letters from Egypt and is used for letters to both superiors and equals.[32] Both the name of the addressee and the name of the sender may be preceded by a noun specifying the relative positions of the sender and the addressee (as, e.g., *'my* 'my mother', *'ḥy* 'my brother', *mr'y* 'my lord' [addressee]; *'ḥwk* 'your brother', *'bdk* 'your servant' [sender]). Addresses of this type are attested in letters from the seventh century onwards and are the oldest known address formulae found in Aramaic letters (Adon papyrus [*TAD* A1.1]). They still occur in texts from Hellenistic Egypt.[33] Only one (papyrus) letter from the Arsames correspondence contains this type of formula (*TAD* A6.1); it is addressed to Arsames and does not come from his own chancellery.[34] The letter mentions the addressee in first position, directly followed by the sender (not preceded by *mn*).

Additional evidence for the address formula *mn* PN_1 *'l* PN_2 comes from an unexpected source: it is found in several private letters on ostraca from Elephantine (Clermont Ganneau nos. 144.1f.; 228,1f.).[35]

Even though both the Akhvamazda correspondence and the Arsames correspondence are connected with satrapal scribal offices, the internal evidence from the two correspondences, the evidence from the letters B1–9, and evidence from elsewhere demonstrate that the address formula *mn* PN_1 *'l* PN_2:

– was not restricted to satrapal letters (palimpsest of A3; letters B1–9; letters by other officials among the Arsames correspondence *TAD* A6.14–6.16);

30   Based chiefly on the fact that the letters of Arsames to Nakhtḥor (*TAD* A6.10–13), the letter of Arsames to Armapiya (*TAD* A6.8), the letter of Arsames to Marduk and other officials (*TAD* A6.9), the letter of Varuvahya to Nakhtḥor (*TAD* A6.14), and the letter of Varfish to Nakhtḥor (*TAD* A6.15) all lack a wish for the well-being of the other. The letter of Artaḥaya to Nakhtḥor (*TAD* A 6.16) and the letters of Arsames to Artavant, on the other hand, all feature such a wish.

31   With the preposition *mn* (*mn* PN) in the Hermopolis letters (*TAD* A2.1–7) and in *TAD* A3.3 (see Folmer 1995, 624 with n.137). In one instance the preposition *'l* has intruded into this type of address formula (*TAD* A2.4:1). There are no examples for *'l* PN_1 PN_2.

32   On the use of 'my brother' in Neo-Babylonian letters addressed to an inferior, see also above, n.28.

33   Folmer 1995, 727; Schwiderski 2000, 104.

34   The initial preposition is lost, it cannot be ascertained whether it was *'l* or *'l*.

35   See Lozachmeur 2006. See also Folmer 1995, 623, and Schwiderski 2013, 161–62.

– was not restricted to letters by high officials to subordinates;
– was not restricted to official letters on papyrus / parchment (it is also found on Elephantine ostraca);
– was not only used in the East (it equally occurs in the West: the Elephantine ostraca).

This address formula, then, probably had its origin in the satrapal chancelleries of the Achaemenid administration (Arsames; Akhvamazda; see also n.24) and was used primarily in official letters on parchment and papyrus. It gradually adopted new elements (*'ḥy*) and even found its way into more informal letter types (the Elephantine ostraca). Since the evidence clearly demonstrates that the address formula *mn* PN$_1$ *'l* PN$_2$ was not only used in letters from superiors to subordinates, one may infer that the formula did not imply differences in status between the correspondents.[36]

6.2. Wishes of well-being (tables 2 and 7)

In the Akhvamazda correspondence, the wish of well-being is absent. The only exception is the palimpsest text of A2, addressed to Daizaka, the person referred to in A2 as the *spr'* ([*mn*] *ḥrdwšt 'l dyzk* 'from' Khvardushta to Daizaka'). The text has *šlm wšrrt šgy' hwšrt lk* 'I send you abundant greetings of welfare and strength'. This wish is also found in some of the letters belonging to the Arsames correspondence: Arsames wishes Artavant well (*TAD* A6.3−6.5; 6.7), but omits the formula when he addresses his *pqyd* 'official' Nakhthor (*TAD* A 6.11−6.13). In the last three letters, the address is extended to *knzsrm wknwth* 'Kenzasirma and his colleagues', the commander of troops Armapiya (*TAD* A6.8), and the group of seven addressees (all indicated with *pqyd*) in *TAD* A6.9. It is also absent from the letter of Varuvahya to Nakhthor, Kendasirma and his colleagues (*TAD* A6.14), and that of Varfish to Nakhthor (*TAD* A6.15).

The *pqyd* Nakhthor is addressed with *šlm wšrrt šgy' hwšrt lk* in a letter by *Artaḥaya* (*TAD* A6.16), but not in the letter orders sent to him by Arsames (*TAD* A10−13) or in the letters by Varfish (*TAD* A6.15) and Varuvahya (*TAD* A6.14). Apparently, the correspondents of *TAD* A6.16 were equals. Nakhthor is addressed in a friendly manner in this letter. In *TAD* A6.10−6.15, on the other hand, Nakhthor is subordinate to the sender and is overloaded with orders (expressed through imperatives).

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36   This possibility has already been suggested by Schwiderski. He bases his argument on the letter of Artaḥaya to Nakhthor (*TAD* A6.16; Schwiderski 2000, 233).

The formula *šlm wšrrt šgy' hwšrt lk* is notably absent in the letters which conclude with the formula PN$_1$ *yd' ṭ'm' znh* PN$_2$ *spr'* (all by Arsames). The two formulae clearly are mutually exclusive. The absence of a wish of well-being from the Akhvamazda and Arsames letter orders may be understood as a characteristic of letter orders with a colophon. This is confirmed by letters B1–9, which contain evidence for the formula *šlm wšrrt šgy' hwšrt lk* (B1; 4).[37] Letter B4 bears the interesting variant *l'ḥy* 'to my brother', instead of *lk* 'to you': *šlm wšrrt šgy' hwšrt l'ḥy* 'I send my brother abundant greetings of welfare and strength'. In this letter, *'ḥy* is also found in the internal address (see §6.1 and §6.5.1a).

Apart from occurrences in the palimpsest of A2, letters B1–9 (see table 6), and the Arsames correspondence, the formula *šlm wšrrt šgy' hwšrt lk* is also found in private letters from several places in Egypt (*TAD* A3.8 and *TAD* A3.3).[38] The formula seems to have been well-rooted in the epistolary tradition of the Achaemenid period.[39]

6.3. *wk't* (tables 3 and 8)

The formula *wk't* 'and now then' is used to mark the transition to the body of the letter. It follows the address and – where present – the wish of well-being. It is not only a characteristic of official correspondences on parchment and papyrus (cf. below),[40] but also of private letters on papyrus.[41] Some variation notwithstanding (*k't* without the conjunction *w*; use of the related forms *k'n*

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37 It can be restored in B2 *šlm w*[*šrrt šgy' hw*]*šrt lk* and probably in B6 as well (only the *š* of *šlm* can be read).

38 It has been partially restored in *TAD* A3.3: *šlm wšrrt* [*hwšrt lk*]. Porten and Yardeni did not reconstruct *šgy'*, apparently because of the lack of space for such a restoration. There would be enough space, however, if one omitted the restoration *wk't* at the beginning of the next line. In both letters the sender refers to himself as *'ḥwk* 'your brother'. In *TAD* A3.3, the sender addresses the addressee with *bry* 'my son'. Both letters are linked to the Jewish community of Elephantine, but were written from other places in Egypt (Migdol for *TAD* A3.3 and Memphis, possibly, for *TAD* A3.8).

39 See Folmer 1995, 657f.

40 On the mixed situation among the official letters belonging to the Yedaniah archive, see Folmer 1995, 663.

41 See Folmer 1995, 661–671 for discussion. The feature is also found in the Hermopolis papyri from the late sixth century (Folmer 1995, 664), which also have one instance of *wk'n* (*TAD* A2.7, 2).

and *k'nt*),[42] it can be ascertained that *wk't* was the standard form used to introduce the body of the letter in Aramaic letters from the Achaemenid period.

In the Akhvamazda letters, only the standard form *wk't* is used. The corpus agrees in this respect with the Arsames letters, including the two letters found at Elephantine (*TAD* A6.2; *TAD* A6.1). In the Akhvamazda letters, *wk't* follows immediately after the address formula, as in other official letters lacking a wish of well-being, including the letter orders by Arsames (such as *TAD* A6.2 and *TAD* A6.8–6.15; cf. table 2). This characteristic actually underlines the identification of the Akhvamazda letters as further examples of letter orders.

The formula *wk't* recurs in B1–9, where it follows the wish of well-being (B1:1; 2:1; 3:2; 4:1). This feature clearly distinguishes this group from the letter orders A1–8.[43]

The use of *wk't* in the Akhvamazda correspondence (A1–8), and in letters B1-9 demonstrates that its use as a transition marker belongs to a strong epistolary tradition that lasted throughout the Achaemenid period.[44]

6.4. PN spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh ('PN the spr knows of this order') (table 5)

6.4.1. The b'l ṭ'm and the spr

Aramaic letters from the Achaemenid period typically mention two officials involved in the production of official documents, namely the *b'l ṭ'm* and the *spr*. The noun phrase *b'l ṭ'm* 'chancellor' (lit. 'the master of the order', i.e. the official in charge of the order) is a loan-word from Akkadian.[45] The word *spr* 'scribe' is an Aramaic word (*p'al* active participle). Both officials are known from Akkadian texts. The Akkadian title *bēl-ṭēmi* is known from the Neo-Assyrian period and from several Neo-Babylonian texts from the Achaemenid period.[46] It probably entered the Aramaic language and adminis-

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42 In private letters on ostraca from Elephantine, the related forms *k'nt* and *k'n* are quite common in this position. The same variation is found in letters in Biblical Aramaic. See Folmer 1995, 665–667; 669.

43 In B4:1f., *wk't* is followed by a second wish, again followed by *wk't*.

44 The latest example in Egypt comes from an ostracon found in Edfu, dateable to the Hellenistic period (third century). See Folmer 1995: 669.

45 Biblical Aramaic *b'el ṭ'em*. See Kaufman 1974, 109 n. 390; Hoftijzer / Jongeling 1995, 427, s.v. ṭe'em²: 'the one who drafts the order, chancellor' (< Akkadian *bēl ṭēmi*); Muraoka / Porten 2003 (table of loan-words).

46 Stolper 1989, 300. Stolper has an interesting example of the co-occurrence of the *spr* and the *b'l ṭ'm* in a Babylonian legal text from the Achaemenid period (BM 74554; dated 486; Stolper 1989: 299f.). In this text, two persons are indicated as ᴸᵁ *si-pir-ri* ᴱᴺ*ṭè-e-mu* (among them one person with a Hebrew name; unlike the evidence from the Aramaic documents, his father's name is also mentioned; see §6.4.2). On the

trative system *via* the Neo-Assyrian chancelleries and courts.[47] The Akkadian title *sepīru* (a loan-word from Aramaic *spr*) appears in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian.[48] It denoted a bilingual scribe, skilled in Akkadian and Aramaic, and engaged in the production of administrative texts.[49] The cooperation of the two officials in the production of administrative orders seems to have been an Achaemenid innovation.[50]

The two functionaries held high-ranking positions in the Achaemenid administration and co-occur in *Ezra* (4:8.9.17). The fact that the *bʿl ṭʿm* is mentioned first and is followed by the *spr* probably indicates that the person in office as *bʿl ṭʿm* was higher-ranking than the person in office as *spr*:[51]

> *rᵊḥûm bᵊʾēl-ṭᵊʿēm wᵊšimšay sāp̄rā kᵊṯaḇû ʾigg ᵊrāh ḥadāh ʿal-yᵊrûšlem lᵊʾartaḥšastʾ malkāʾ kᵊnēmāʾ* (Ezra 4:8)

> 'Reḥum the *bʿl ṭʿm* and Shimshai the *spr* wrote a letter concerning Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes in the following way'

The two functions are also collocated in *TAD A*6.2:23. In this text the two offices are combined in the person of Anani, which is a Hebrew name.[52] The text mentions another person involved in the production of the record, Nabuʿaqab (l.23), who has an Aramaic name. He is the subject of the verb *ktb* and may have been the person who physically wrote the document. This interpretation is complicated by the fact that *nbwʿqb ktb* 'Nabuʿaqab wrote (it)' was added in a different hand, following *ʾnny sprʾ bʿl ṭʿm* 'Anani the *spr* is / was *bʿl ṭʿm*'.[53] Also remarkable is that the name 'Nabuʿaqab recurs in the area of the external data in the clause *nbwʿqb sprʾ* 'Nabuʿaqab is / was the *spr*'.[54] The mention

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basis of the single use of the determinative LÚ, Stolper argues that the two elements are in apposition and refer to one person, hence its interpretation as 'scribe (and) chancellor' / 'scribe-chancellor'. The two individuals are associated with the governor of Babylon and Ebirnari.

47 Stolper 1989, 301.
48 Pearce 1999, 356f.
49 Pearce 1999 363ff. See also Vanderhooft 2011, 531–534.
50 Stolper 1989, 301.
51 The principle that the most important person be mentioned first is also visible in the lists of officials in Dan. 3:2.3.
52 Porten 1968, 57.
53 Rather than the translation 'Anani is *spr* (and) *bʿl ṭʿm*'.
54 According to Tavernier, *ʾnny* drafted and wrote the letter and *nbwʿqb* made another copy (Tavernier 2008, 77). There is no space for a reconstruction *ktb*] at the beginning of the line (*ktb*] *nbwʿqb sprʾ* 'N. the *spr* wrote [it]'). In the letter on papyrus sent to Arsames (*TAD A*6.1), there is space to reconstruct *ktb* (see Porten 1983, 414).

of the *spr* in this area is unique and, in my view, points to an extraordinary situation:

> *'nny spr' b'l ṭ'm* 'Anani the *spr* acted as *b'l ṭ'm*' (*TAD A*6.2:23)

At this point, an explanatory note was added in a different hand, indicating that Nabu'qab did the actual writing:[55]

> *nbw'qb ktb* 'Nabu'aqab wrote (it)' (*TAD A*6.2:23)

It is unclear when, where and by whom these words were added. Possibly they were added in order to make the meaning of the words *'nny spr' b'l ṭ'm* compatible with *nbw'qb spr'* in the external data (on the top band; on the unfolded papyrus it appears on the *verso,* below the external address):

> *nbw'qb spr'* 'Nabu'aqab is / was the *spr*' (*TAD* A6.2:28)

In this particular case, a single person (Nabu'aqab) not only physically wrote the letter (*ktb*), but also acted as *spr*. Why *nbw'qb spr'* was added to the external address is unclear, but it may have had to do with an unexpected change of roles for Anani and Nabu'aqab: Anani, otherwise known as a *spr*, took the role of *b'l ṭ'm* and Nabu'aqab, otherwise known as a scribe (subject of *ktb*), acted as *spr* (and as the actual scribe).

At this point, it should be recalled that Anani, the *b'l ṭ'm* of *TAD* A6.2, has a Hebrew name. It is possible that he was from a family of Elephantine scribes, several members of which are known by name: Nathan bar Ananiah and his son Mauwziah bar Nathan.[56] Both occur in legal documents dating to 456–46 BCE (Nathan bar Ananiah) and 434–16 BCE (Mauwziah bar Nathan). Mauwziah bar Nathan is also known as one of the Elephantine communal leaders (*TAD* A4.2–4.3; 4.10; all late fifth century). Papponymy is a well-known principle of the Elephantine documents,[57] so it is unsurprising to find that this Mauwziah bar Nathan had a brother named Ananiah. Perhaps this person was identical to the Anani under discussion. *TAD* C3.15:12 (400 BCE) indeed indicates that, besides the line Ananiah – Nathan – *Mauwziah* – Nathan, there was

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55   Schwiderski 2000, 207 gives the same explanation.
56   Anani is a shortened form of the theophoric name Ananiah. Many Elephantine names have this ending (see Porten 1968, 148). Variation in the name may be found with one and the same individual. So, e.g., the name of the temple servant Ananiah bar Azariah, also known as Anani bar Azariah [*TAD* B3.1-13].
57   See Porten 1968, 235–237; Porten 1996, 87. Porten 1968, 236 n.2 lists 22 cases of papponymy. Among these are Anani bar Nathan bar Ananiah, Nathan bar Mauwziah bar Nathan bar Ananiah, and Nathan bar Ananiah bar Nathan bar Ananiah.

a line Ananiah – Nathan – *Ananiah* – Nathan.[58] Yet, an alternative possibility would be to identify the Anani of *TAD* A6.2 as the Anani bar Mauwzi, who is also mentioned as a contributor to the Jewish temple in *TAD* C3.15:67. He may have been a brother of Nathan bar Mauwziah bar Nathan bar Ananiah (witness in *TAD* B3.11:19 [402 BCE]). If so, Anani would represent the third generation of scribes in this family.

We do not know for sure whether Anani held a permanent position in Arsames' chancellery in Memphis but, given the importance of this function, it seems reasonable to believe so. Alternatively, one could assume that Arsames occasionally made use of the services of a scribe belonging to a well-known Elephantine scribal family.[59]

The fact that Anani's patronym is not mentioned in Arsames' letter on papyrus (*TAD* A6.2) is unsurprising and agrees with other Achaemenid evidence on the *spr* / *b'l ṭ'm* (cf. §6.4.2). Anani's father's name is not mentioned in official letter *TAD* A4.3 either. In that letter, this fact is significant. It presumably indicates that Anani was a well-known person at Elephantine.[60]

6.4.2. PN *spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* in the Akhvamazda Letters

Scholars have generally assumed that the position of *b'l ṭ'm* should be equated with the position of the person characterized by the formula (PN) *yd' ṭ'm' znh* '(PN) knows of this order'.[61] The Akhvamazda letters shed some light on our understanding of these two phrases. Letters A1–8 identify the *b'l ṭ'm* and *spr* as officials.[62] All these letters but one (A2; cf. below) conclude with the formula PN *spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* 'PN the *spr* knows of this order'. This formula occurs at the bottom of the *recto*; the external address is written on the *verso*.

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58 Here a certain Nathan bar Anani is listed among the contributors to the Jewish temple. By 400 Nathan bar Ananiah, mentioned as a witness in *TAD* B2.3:32 (460/459 BCE), had probably died.

59 Another travelling scribe is known from *TAD* A4.3, a letter by Mauwziah bar Nathan, sent from Abydos to Elephantine, 370 km away (Porten 1996, 131 n.11). Mauwziah bar Nathan was not only a scribe but also one of the Elephantine communal leaders (known from several late fifth century documents). It is not certain in what capacity he travelled to Abydos. The same letter also refers to a certain Anani, whose servants had rescued Mauwziah from an awkward situation. Anani may have been the same person as the *spr* – *b'l ṭ'm* referred to by this name in *TAD* A6.2. On this suggestion, see also Porten 1968, 284; *idem* 1996, 121 n.74.

60 See also Porten 1996, 131 n.16.

61 See Tavernier 2008, 70.

62 The relevant information is lacking for A8.

In one case (A1), the letter was too long and had to be continued on the *verso*, yet with the external address following only after a large blank space.[63]

Three different names occur with *spr* in the said formula: Daizaka (A4; 7), Nurafratara (A5; 6) and Hashavakhshu (A1). All these names are Persian. In A3, the name of the *spr* is damaged:

> *dyzk spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* (A4:6; 7:2) 'Daizaka the scribe knows of this order'
> *nwrprtr spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* (A5:3; 6:11) 'Nurafratara the scribe knows of this order'
> *hšwḥšw spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* (A1:12) 'Hashavakhshu the scribe knows of this order'
>] *spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* (A3:3f.) 'PN] the scribe knows of this order'

A complication is that letter A2:7 has *dyzk spr' w'tpy' b'l ṭ'm* in the same place – at the end of the letter, where it clearly represents the colophon – instead of *dyzk spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* (as in A4:6; 7:2). The fact that the two formulae appear in the same position strengthens the idea that 'he who has knowledge of the order' (*yd' ṭ'm' znh*) is the same person as the *b'l ṭ'm*, or, more precisely, that the person who held the position of *spr also* assumed the function of *b'l ṭ'm*. In letter A2, the functions of *spr* and *b'l ṭ'm* were apparently assumed by two different persons, just as in the letter orders belonging to the Arsames correspondence. The dates of the letters may help to understand this: A2 is dated to 351, A4 to 347, while A7 is undated. It is possible that Daizaka was *spr* earlier in his career and that some years later he was appointed to the function of *b'l ṭ'm* as well. Other scribes mentioned in the documents always hold this double function.[64]

Further complicating the interpretation of A2 is the addition of the name of the *b'l ṭ'm* – Athfiya (*'tpy'*) – above the line, just above the name Daizaka (*w'tpy'* 'and *'tpy'*). This addition is a puzzle. Is the explanation a mere scribal error or was *dyzk spr' b'l ṭ'm* written on purpose and later changed? Without the correction the line reads *dyzk spr' b'l ṭ'm* ('Daizaka the *spr* is *b'l ṭ'm*'), which is perfectly understandable (cf. above on *TAD* A6.2:23 *'nny spr' b'l ṭ'm*), but not expected in the Akhvamazda letter orders. In other such documents PN *spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* is found (cf. above), showing that the two functions were fulfilled by one and the same person. Unless we accept that *yd' ṭ'm' znh* and *b'l ṭ'm* represent *different* functions, it makes more sense to understand the supralinear addition in A2 as a correction of a true scribal error – by the

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63 On *TAD* A6.15, a long letter from the Arsames correspondence, see §6.5.1.
64 In one other document mention is made of a *spr*. In a list of disbursements (dated to the year 329), a certain Ahuradata (*'hrdt*) is mentioned as the *spr* (C3:42, *'hrdt spr'*). It is uncertain whether he is the same person as that named as *'hrdt*, and who is referred to as a *frtrk* 'foreman' in A1:8. In C4:37ff. (dated to the year 324), a certain *'hrdt* is found in the function of *'pdyt'* 'the supervisor' (ll.37, 39, 44, 48).

scribe or by someone else.[65] If so, the uncorrected text is only accidentally similar to the line in *TAD* A6.2.

Another question which needs to be addressed is why the more important official, the *bʿl ṭʿm*, who is also mentioned in first position in *Ezra*, is mentioned second in A2. Perhaps the inverted order was occasioned by the frequency of the formula PN *sprʾ ydʿ ṭʿm znh*; also, it may be another hint that in fourth-century Bactria the two functions were routinely combined in one person. As discussed, A2 may reflect a situation in which Daizaka was at the beginning of his career, perhaps as an apprentice.

Incidentally, a person named Daizaka also occurs in the palimpsest text of A2 and may well be the same person. In this text we find Daizaka as the addressee of a letter sent by Khvardushta (*mn*...] *ḫdrwšt ʿl dyzk* 'from] Khvardushta to Daizaka'). These words clearly belong to an address for it preserves some traces of the wish of well-being found in some of the Arsames letters: [*šlm w*]*šrrt šgyʾ hwšrt* [*lk* 'I send you abundant greetings of welfare and strength' (cf. §§6.1–2). In the Arsames letters, this wish is characteristic of letters which are not emphatically dominated by the difference in status of the correspondents (see above §6.1). Supplementary information on the nature of this letter comes from a clear quotation from an order by Akhvamazda: *ʾḥmzd kn ʾmr* 'Akhvamazda says thus'. Such quotations are frequent in the Arsames letters (*kʿt* PN *kn ʾmr TAD* A6.3:6; 6.4:2; 6.6:4; 6.11:3; 6.13:4; 6.15:3) and are also found in the Akhvamazda letters (A1:1).[66]

Events might be reconstructed as follows: Daizaka received an official letter from a person named Khvardushta. The letter, though relating to the working environment of Akhvamazda, apparently did not need to be preserved (any longer). So Daizaka the *spr* reused or made available for reuse the precious writing material for a draft letter by Akhvamazda to Bagavant. In this new letter he was involved as a *spr*. In other words, the combined evidence from text and palimpsest text implies that the holder of the position of *spr* merited indirect access to the archives at the least and was possibly also involved in deciding which document could be disposed of and reused as writing materials for new documents.[67]

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65 Gerrit van der Kooij points out to me that the nib of the pen used for the correction is different from the nib used in the rest of the letter (*recto*). This suggests that the correction was made at a later stage.

66 Compare also the conflated construction *kʿn ʾmr ʾḥmzd* 'now says Akhvamazda' in A2:5. The confused scribe rubbed off *kʿt* at the end of the clause.

67 The handwriting in the letters seems to indicate, just as in the Arsames letters, that the *spr* was not the same person who actually wrote the document. Van der Kooij informs me that A4 and A7 were written by a different hand (both letters mention

Turning again to the Arsames correspondence, it may be observed that the letter orders (*TAD* A6.8-6.13) feature a similar yet different formula, consisting of two clauses: PN$_1$ *yd' ṭ'm' znh* PN$_2$ *spr'* 'PN$_1$ knows of the order; PN$_2$ is the *spr*'. These clauses are found at the end of the body of the letter, on the *recto*; the external address is found on the *verso*. The evidence for the formula is as follows:

> *bgsrw yd' ṭ'm' znh 'ḥppy spr'* (*TAD* A6.8) 'Bagasrava knows of this order. Aḥpepi is the scribe'
>
> *bgsrw yd' ṭ'm' znh ršt spr'* (*TAD* A6.9) 'Bagasrava knows of this order. Rashta is the scribe'
>
> *'rtḥy yd' ṭ'm' znh ršt spr'*[68] (*TAD* A6.10) 'Artaḥaya knows of this order. Rashta is the scribe'
>
> *'rtwhy yd' ṭ'm' znh ršt spr'* (*TAD* A6.11–6.13) 'Artavahya knows of this order. Rashta is the scribe'

In the Arsames letters, the position of the person indicated by *yd' ṭ'm' znh* is clearly different from the person indicated by the title *spr*. Nowhere in this corpus can evidence be found that these two positions were filled by the same person.

Both in the Arsames and Akhvamazda letters, the names of those who know of the order and the names of the *spr* are predominantly Persian.[69] In the Akhvamazda letters, some of these names contain a Bactrian or other regional element (Daizaka and Hashavakshu),[70] which suggests that local people could be appointed to these positions. Similarly, a *spr* with an Egyptian name, 'Aḥpepi appears once in the Arsames correspondence (*TAD* A6.8:4) and the Elephantine official Anani – *spr* and *b'l ṭ'm* – may have made, as we saw, his

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Daizaka as the *spr*). The handwriting of A2 requires more study. A5 and A6 (both mention Nurafratara as the *spr*) also seem to be written by a different hand. I am grateful to Gerrit van der Kooij for sharing with me this information. The palaeography of the documents clearly warrants more attention.

68   A person with the same name is also known from *TAD* A6.16 (as the sender of the letter addressed to Nakhtḥor).

69   On Nurafratara and Athfiya in the Akhvamazda letters, see Naveh / Shaked 2012, 58f. So also the name of the scribe mentioned in C3:42 (Ahuradata, in *'hrdt spr'*; Naveh / Shaked 2012, 57). Fried believes that the persons who are referred to as 'scribe' and with 'PN knows of this order' bear "Iranized versions of local names" (since they have Persian names with Bactrian theophorics) and assumes that persons with these functions were local Bactrians (Fried 2013, 320). This may be true for some of these names, but certainly not for all of them: the conclusion is based on the preliminary remarks in Shaked 2004, 23–24 (before the final publication by Naveh and Shaked in 2012). In the Arsames letters on parchment, Bagasrava*, Artavahya, Artaḥaya (the ones who know of the order) and Rashta (the *spr*) are found.

70   Naveh / Shaked 2012, 58–59.

career in the satrapal offices of Memphis alongside a *spr* colleague with an Aramaic name (Nabuʿaqab; *TAD* A6.2). The names of the two Samarian provincial officials Reḥum and Shimshai in the biblical Book of Ezra may be of Hebrew origin.[71] These officials' patronymic is not mentioned in the biblical text.

A comparison of the Akhvamazda and Arsames letters leads to the following conclusions:

– The information on the persons in office known as *ydʿ ṭʿmʾ znh* and *spr* is part of the letter itself and is to be found at the very end of it. It represents the administrative colophon (§4, with n.22);
– The information is typically written on the *recto*; in one case, where the letter continued on the *verso* (A1) a blank space intervenes before the beginning of the external address (§ 6.5);
– In the Arsames correspondence, two distinct officials held the office of *ydʿ ṭʿmʾ* and *spr*; in the Akhvamazda letters, one official held both offices (with the exception of A2). The most likely explanation is a simplification of the administrative system by the middle of the 4th century. To what extent there was room for variation among individual satrapal administrations needs to be further investigated;
– The functions of *bʿl ṭʿm* and *spr* were mostly filled by people with Persian names, but there are also many examples of people with local names: Egyptian, Hebrew and Aramaic; Persian names with Bactrian elements (Akhvamazda letters) point in the same direction;
– The officials are not referred to with their father's name (see, however, n.47);
– *TAD* A6.2 adds to the impression that the functions of *spr* and *bʿl ṭʿm* were not clearly delimited. Various overlaps occur: at times, a *spr* could act as a *bʿl ṭʿm* and the person who wrote the document (*ktb*) could take the role of *spr*;
– Both in fifth century Babylon and in fourth century Bactria, high officials with Persian names had a basic knowledge of Aramaic, at least to the extent that they were capable of writing letter orders.

As referred above (§4), Tavernier reconstructed the administrative procedures underlying the Aramaic letter orders. He did so by comparing their colophons with those of the Elamite letter orders from Persepolis. According to him, the *bʿl ṭʿm* was the person who transmitted the (oral) instructions given in

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71 There are, however, parallels for these names in other North-West Semitic texts, and in Akkadian too. See Köhler / Baumgartner 1967-1995, 1132, 1472, 1781, 1793.

Persian (or Aramaic); lastly a scribe (*spr*) translated these instructions into an Aramaic draft; a professional scribe – unnamed in the Aramaic letter orders – wrote the final document.[72] Though this scenario may, broadly speaking, be correct, I would venture the opinion that in reality the tasks of the officials were not always so clearly delimited. It is this manner, I believe, that the evidence from *TAD* A6.2 and Akhvamazda letter A2 can be reconciled with a general protocol without the need of assuming exceptions.[73]

Finally, the title *b'l ṭ'm* is also found in the palimpsest of A5; the words are without context (they are visible above the external address of the second letter). In the new letter written over it, Nurafratara is referred to as *spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* (5:3; also in 6:11). There is no evidence for the *spr* and / or the *b'l ṭ'm* in letters B1–9 (see table 10).

6.5 External data

An important feature of the letters on papyrus and parchment is their information on the exterior. Such information was important not just for the delivery of the letters but for administrative purposes as well. Once the document was filed, its most important details could be gathered without needing to unfold and open the document. This information pertained at least to the addressee, but the sender's name, the date, the content, as well as instructions for the delivery of the letter, could also be added. Information on the name and the whereabouts of the addressee were obviously important to the person entrusted with the delivery; it was always mentioned first and often alone.[74] The names of correspondents, date and short content served administrative purposes; such additional information is typical of (official) letters which needed to be filed. Additional information on the scribe is a rarity (see below).

For a thorough appreciation of the external data, it is important to understand how the parchments were written and how they were folded. Unfortunately Naveh and Shaked give no information on this matter.[75] Porten has described the process for the Arsames documents.[76] When the scribe had finished writing on the *recto*, he folded the parchment up from the bottom.

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72   Tavernier 2008, 71; see also *idem*, this volume.
73   It is unnecessary, along these lines, to assume that Anani drafted and wrote the order himself and that Nabu'aqab was responsible for another copy (Tavernier 2008, 70).
74   On the Hermopolis papyri, see Schwiderski 2000, 196f.
75   The photographs of A4 (*verso*) and B2 (*verso*) are printed upside down (Naveh-Shaked 2012, 94–95, 140–141).
76   Porten 1979, 92f. On *TAD* A6.1–2, see Porten 1980, 43. These letters were folded in the same way.

He then folded down the top band and wrote the external address on the second band.[77] Before the letter was sealed, it was folded in half and then into quarters.

The same procedures for writing and folding were followed, more or less, in the Akhvamazda letters, but there are some differences. As in the Arsames correspondence, the external address was written on the second band exposed by folding back the top band over the second band (A1–6). Unlike the Arsames letters, date, content and delivery information were written on the top band (A1–4; A8). In the case of A5–6 only the second band was used for external data (cf. §§6.5.1, 6.5.3). The same procedure of folding was followed, more or less, in letters B1–9 (there is information for B1–5 only). Letters B2 and B3 were folded like the Arsames letters on parchment. In letters B1 and B4 the scribe apparently started to fold from the top, though. It is impossible to tell how these documents were subsequently folded. Only palimpsest A2 bears clear signs of the final stage of folding.[78]

The Arsames parchments were never written on the *verso*, except for the external address. If the scribe needed more space, he turned the parchment 90º clockwise and continued to write in the right margin (see *TAD* A6.15).[79] In the Akhvamazda letters, on the other hand, the scribe turned the parchment over to the *verso* and continued to write at the top of the *verso* (A1).

In most of the instances, the external data in the Akhvamazda letters amount to two lines. These were written on two successive bands of the parchment that were folded back. The second band is generally reserved for the addressee, the first band gives additional information and starts with the date (A1; A2–4). Two documents just give one line to the external address and other external data (A5–6), even though there was space for an extra line in both documents. The addressees are found on this line. In addition, the single line in A5 has information on the contents of the letter. (cf. §6.5.3). In A8, only the last element of the external data has been preserved (*hyty 'grt' z'*; §6.5.4).[80]

As far as can be judged, the external address is a characteristic of all the Akhvamazda letters (table 4). It is also a characteristic of letters B1–9. In this group of letters, these are the only external data present (see §6.5.1 and table 9).

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77 If one turns the top of the parchment over to the *verso*, the external address will appear on the second band from the bottom.

78 One *administrative* document (C2) was still folded, tied and sealed when it was offered for sale; it looks as if it was folded into quarters, but this is difficult to judge from the photograph. See Naveh / Shaked 2012, 187.

79 Porten 1979, 92.

80 The external address of A7 is completely lost.

External data are also found in official and private letters on papyrus from Egypt. In most cases this information is limited to an address.[81] External addresses for obvious reasons do not feature in letters on ostraca from Elephantine.

Among the official documents from Egypt there are some which lack an external address (Arsames: *TAD* A6.9; Yedaniah: *TAD* A4.7 and *TAD* A4.8). *TAD* A6.9, belonging to the Arsames correspondence, is unique. It is a so-called *viaticum*, an authorization to travel and to receive supplies for a journey.[82] It not only lacks an external address, it indicates the whereabouts of the addressees mentioned in the internal address. Presumably, this arrangement is explained by the need to present the 'passport' at multiple occasions. Two letters belonging to the Yedaniah archive from Elephantine (*TAD* A4.7–8, concerning the rebuilding of the Jewish temple at Elephantine) lack external addresses, which may further indicate that they were drafts. An external address is, finally, also absent from the well-known memorandum from the same archive (*TAD* A4.9), which is easily explicable from its status: not a letter *sensu stricto*, but a memo for the messenger. The document also lacks an internal address.

The Arsames letters on parchment also possess external data on the contents of the letters (see §6.5.3). External data on the officials responsible for the phrasing and writing of letters are generally rare. The name of the person who penned the official letter addressed to Arsames (*TAD* A6.1) perhaps is mentioned in it, but the text is difficult to understand.[83] The *spr* is mentioned in the letter on papyrus sent by Arsames (*TAD* A6.2; on the interpretation of *nbw'qb spr'*, see §6.4.1). According to Porten's reconstruction of the two doc-

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81   Among papyrus letters, external addresses are found in *TAD* A2.1–2, 7; A3.3–4; A3.6–3. 11; A4.1–4; A5.7; A6.1–2.

82   See Briant 2002, 364; Kuhrt 2010, chapter 15, no. 4; Tavernier 2008, 66. Also referred to as a 'passport' or 'open letter'.

83   PN]*'lym syn'rš 'zdkr' knth* 'PN], the servant of Sinerish the herald, their colleague' (*TAD* A6.1). Porten refers to *TAD* A6.2 and assumes that it refers to the scribe of the document. He reconstructs *ktb* at the beginning of the line (Porten 1983, 414). The text is written on the top band and is followed by the date (same line). It is preceded by two address lines on the second band. Given its position, PN]*'lym syn'rš 'zdkr' knth* is part of the external data (cf. also *TAD* A6.2), added in the chancellery where the letter was written. However, the interpretation is complicated by the single word *ptḥm*[(an Egyptian name) written below the final line of the external data (also on the top band). Perhaps *ptḥm*[is the name of an Egyptian archivist. Schwiderski suggests reconstructing *ktb* PN] *'lym syn'rš 'zdkr' knth* and *ptḥm*[... *spr'* (Schwiderski 2000, 181). At present, the problem seems unsolvable.

uments, the information on the *spr* was invisible as long as the papyrus was folded (and sealed).[84]

The order of the external elements in the Akhvamazda letters is fixed:

1. addressee (always present)
2. date (in some Akhvamazda letters; also in *TAD* A6.1–6.2; not in the Arsames letters on parchment)
3. content
4. instruction for delivery

The external addresses in the Akhvamazda letters demonstrate some remarkable features, which will be discussed in the following sections.

6.5.1. External address (tables 4 and 9)

It is a general characteristic of letters on papyrus and parchment from the Achaemenid period that the first preposition in the external address is followed by a blank space where the seal was attached after folding and tying. The initial preposition varies (it is, e.g., *mn* in the Arsames letters on parchment and *TAD* A.6.2; *'l* in the Akhvamazda letters; *mn* in letters B1–9). It is dependent on the address formula used in the external address (see below).

6.5.1.a. Addressee (tables 4 and 9)

The mention of the addressee is a fixed element of external addresses (see above, 6.5). These are the only external data always present in the Akhvamazda letters (see table 4; on the preposition see below). All the letters – as far as can be verified – are addressed to Bagavant. In one instance, his title is added (by using the apposition *pḥt' bḥlmy* 'the governor in Khulmi' [A2]; see also 6.5.1.d). In the remaining Akhvamazda letters, Bagavant's position is not specified.

Remarkably, in some of the addresses of B1–9, the name of the addressee is preceded in the internal address (§6.1) by *'l 'ḥy* 'my brother' (B1;3; palimpsest B1; but compare *'l* PN in B2;4). The use of *'ḥy* in the external address seems to be congruent with the use of *'ḥy* in the internal address (B1). Letters B1–9 also refer to the sender in the external address (cf. 6.5.1.b and table 9). On the unique character of *'ḥy* within the formula *mn* PN$_1$ *'l* PN$_2$, see §6.1.

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84   See Porten 1983, 404f.

6.5.1.b. Sender (tables 4 and 9)

In the external address of the Akhvamazda letters the sender goes completely unmentioned. This remarkable feature possibly points to a less complicated administrative system in the Bactrian chancellery of the middle of the fourth century. Information on the name of the sender was neither vital to the delivery, nor apparently to the administrative processing of these letters. The addressee would receive the necessary information anyway, as the sender's name was mentioned in the internal address.

On the other hand, the external addresses of the Arsames letters always hold information on the sender (first position) and the addressee (second position), just as in the internal address (see table 4).

Letters B1–9 also possess information on the sender in the external address (*mn* PN). As in the internal address (cf. §6.1; tables 6 and 9), the sender is found in the first position

6.5.1.c. Use of ’l in the external address (tables 4 and 9)

In the Achaemenid period, the Old Aramaic preposition *’l* was pushed out by the preposition *‘l* (§6.1), but survived to some extent in the internal and external addresses of letters.[85] In the Akhvamazda letters, the sender's name in the external address is preceded by the preposition *’l* 'to' rather than by *‘l* 'to', which is found in the internal address, at the beginning of the letter (§6.1).

The use of *’l* in the external address of the Akhvamazda letters is a remarkable archaism and demonstrates the familiarity of fourth-century Bactrian chancelleries with older epistolary traditions, as yet known only from the West. Thus far, the occurrence of *’l* in the (external) address is not known from other official correspondences originating from the satrapal chancelleries. It is notably absent from the Arsames correspondences.

In letters B1–9, however, the old preposition *’l* is not found in the external address; instead, *‘l* is used (B1–4; palimpsest B4; see table 9 and §6.1).

The contrast, in the Akhvamazda letters, between the use of *’l* in the external and that of *‘l* in the internal address, is not completely unique, though. It is parallelled by one other text, one of the Hermopolis letters from the late sixth century (*TAD* A2.4):

> *TAD* A2.4:1 *‘l mr'y psmy ‘bdk mkbnt* 'to my lord Psami, your servant Makkibanit' (internal address)
> *TAD* A2.4:14 *’l ’by psmy mn mkbnt br psmy* 'to my father Psami, from Makkibanit the son of Psami' (external address)

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85   Outside the address formula *’l* is no longer found. See Folmer 1995, 621-628.

The use of the preposition *'l* in the internal address of this letter is remarkable, since all the remaining Hermopolis letters use *'l* instead (both in the internal and external addresses). This feature is not unattested among other Aramaic letters from the Achaemenid period. It demonstrates, at the same time, the intrusion of the preposition *'l* into the internal address early in the Achaemenid period (Hermopolis), as well as a strong persistency of the ancient preposition *'l* in the external address at the very end of the Achaemenid period. Taken together, these cases witness to the fact that *'l* > *'l* was a gradual process, the external address being the last stronghold of *'l*.

6.5.1.d. Specification of the whereabouts of the addressee (tables 4 and 9)

The addressee's name (Bagavant) is always followed by a specification of his whereabouts in the external address:[86]

> (*'l bgwnt*) *zy bḥlmy* 'who is in Khulmi' (A4-6[87])
> (*'l bgwnt wdyny'*) *zy bḥlmy* 'who is in Khulmi' (A1)
> ([*'l*] *bgwnt*) *pḥt' bḥlmy* 'the governor in Khulmi' (A2)

In the Arsames letters on parchment, the addressee's whereabouts are often specified: in the letters addressed to Artahant (Artavant) (*zy bmṣryn* 'who is in Egypt' [*TAD* A6.3; 6.7]) (partially restored[88]), in the letters to Nakhthor (*zy bmṣryn btḥtyt'* 'who is in Lower Egypt' [*TAD* A6.10]; *zy b*]*mṣryn* 'who is in Egypt'[*TAD* A6.15]), and to Nakhthor and his colleagues (*zy bmṣryn* 'who are in Egypt' [*TAD* A6.11–13]).

The same specification is notably absent from Artaḥaya's letter to Nakhthor (*TAD* A6.16).[89] Apparently there was no need for specification: both parties may have been in Egypt at the time. It may be that this Artaḥaya is the same as the one who 'knows of the order' in *TAD* A6.10:10.

The whereabouts of the addressee are not specified in the external addresses of the letters B1–9.

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86 In Arsames' letter found at Elephantine (*TAD* A6.2), the information on his whereabouts is added to the *sender's* name (= Arsames) in the external address. This is a unique feature (*mn 'ršm zy bmṣ*[*ryn* 'from Arsames who is in Egypt') and it may hint that Arsames' presence in Egypt was not self-evident.

87 In A5, the place name *ḥlmy* is reconstructed. In A3 the place name is completely damaged (*zy b*[...].

88 Other letters to Artahant are completely damaged at this point (*TAD* A6.4–6.6).

89 It is also absent in Arsames' letter to Armapiya (*TAD* A6.8). *TAD* A6.9 has no external address (the passport).

6.5.2. Date (tables 4 and 9)

Most of the Akhvamazda letters have a Babylonian date (A1–4). Two docu-
ments are undated (A5–6), and two further documents are fragmentary at this
point (A7–8).

In the first four documents, the date is found, with other external data,
on the first band. If the top of the parchment is turned to the *verso*, the date
appears below the external address (A1–4):

>] *lmrḥšwn šnt* 6 *’rtḥš*[*sš*] *mlk’* (A1) 'on ...] of Marḥešvan, year six of Artaxer[xes] the
> king'
> *b* 3 *l*[*m*]*rḥšwn* [*šnt*] 8 *’rtḥšsš m*[*lk’*] (A2) 'on the third of Marḥešvan, year eight of Ar-
> taxerxes the K[ing]'
> *b* 10 *lšbṭ šnt* 9 *’rtḥšsš mlk’* (A3) 'on the tenth of Ševaṭ, year 9 of Artaxerxes the King'
> *b* 3 *lsy*[*w*]*n* [*šnt*] 11 [*’rt*]*ḥšsš mlk’* (A4) 'on the third of Sivan, [year] 11 of [Arta]xerxes
> the King'

The two undated documents (A5; A6), only have a single line in the external
data area.[90] In A5, the address formula is found together with the remaining
external data on the second band, in the area reserved for the address. This
area held enough space because of the absence of the date. In A6, only the
address (with the whereabouts of the addressee) is found; there are no further
external data.

The parchment was folded in such a way that both lines would be visible
once the seal and tie were removed and the top band was unfolded (cf. §6.5).
This suggests that the date, together with a brief indication of the letter's con-
tent and its delivery instructions, originated in the offices of the sender and
that this information was important for the purpose of filing the document
in the office where the message was archived after being read. It cannot be
ascertained how the Akhvamazda letters were filed in the receiving chancel-
lery, as the drafts – for obvious reasons – bear no signs of the final phase of
folding.[91] This aspect requires further investigation.

Dates are completely absent from the Arsames letters on parchment, but
they are present in the two Arsames letters on papyrus form Elephantine
(*TAD* A6.1–6.2). The names of the months are Babylonian. The date is found
at the beginning of the second line of the external address (A1–A4):

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90   Letters A7 and A8 are damaged at this point. A7's external data are completely
     lost. In A8, only the last three words of the external data can be read: *hy*]*ty ’grt’ z’*
     (instruction for delivery; see §6.5.4). The preceding words of the external data are
     lost (the parchment is torn at this point).
91   Only palimpsest A2 bears clear signs of the final phase of folding. The Arsames
     letters were possibly filed completely folded (see also Schwiderski 2001, 206).

b 19 *lmrḥšwn šnt* 38 *ʾrtḥšsš* [*mlkʾ*] (*TAD* A6.1) 'on the 19th of Marḥešvan, year 38 of Artaxerxes [the King]'

In this letter, the date is not found at the beginning of a new line (as in Akhvamazda letters A1-4). Rather, the date immediately follows the address.

b 13 *lṭbt šnt* 12 *dry*[*hwš mlkʾ*] (*TAD* A6.2) 'on the 13th of Ševaṭ, year 12 of Dar[ius the King]'

In this letter, the date immediately follows the information *nbwʿqb sprʾ*. Its ordering is as follows: address (first line) – *nbwʿqb sprʾ* (second line) – date (second line).

Some letters from Elephantine do not have external addresses. Two such letters, from the Yedaniah archive from Elephantine, have a Babylonian date at the very end of the letter: *TAD* A4.7–4.8 (*b* 20 *lmrḥšwn šnt* 16 *dryhwš mlkʾ*).[92] The two letters are drafts.

Letters B1–9 are all undated.

6.5.3. Reference to the Content of the Letter (tables 4 and 9)

Most of the external addresses in the Akhvamazda letters contain a brief reference to the content of the letter.[93] These references are prepositional phrases headed by *ʿl* 'concerning'(*ʿl np*[*q*] *byty* 'concerning the taking out from my house' [A2]) or by *b* 'concerning' (*bhlk* 'concerning a tax) [A1]; *bnḥšpy* 'concerning Nikhshapaya' [A4]). Two other references to the content of the letter seem to lack an initial preposition *ʿl* or *b*: *mgdspkn*[94] *zy bkwmy* '(concerning) *mgdspkn* which concerns *kwmy*[95] (A3); *zy lmbny zy bkš* '(concerning) that which is to be built, which is in Kish' (A5). One letter lacks a reference to the content of the letter (A6). The external address of this letter only holds information on the addressed person and his whereabouts. The use of the preposition *b* 'concerning' in these letters is remarkable. In other letters from the Achaemenid period, the preposition *ʿl* is used in this position (see below).

In the Akhvamazda correspondence, the information on the content of the letters follows the date (A1–4). It is to be found on the first band of the parchment (see above 6.5). If there is no date, then the information on the content

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92 Private letters – if dated at all – have an Egyptian date without reference to the regnal year of the ruling king. When present, these dates precede the external address (*TAD* A3.3:13; *TAD* A3.8:14; *TAD* A3.9:8).

93 Letter A7 is damaged at this point (it lacks the external data); A8 lacks what precedes *hy*]*ty ʾgrtʾ zʾ* (instruction for delivery; see §6.5.4).

94 Indicating a name or referring to the subject-matter of the letter (Naveh / Shaked 2012, 91).

95 Place name. See Naveh / Shaked 2012, 91.

immediately follows the name and whereabouts of the addressee (A5). In A5, the external data count for one line only and are written on the second band.

Most of the letters belonging to the Arsames correspondence on parchment contain some brief information on the contents of the letter as well. In these letters, this information is added to the area of the external address (on the second band), to the left of the address. It is written in a smaller handwriting. This information was probably added in the offices where the letter was written.[96] In the Arsames letters on parchment, only the preposition *'l* 'concerning' is used for this purpose, both in combination with a noun or in combination with the relative marker *zy* (*'l zy* 'concerning the fact that'):

> *'l dšn' zy 'ḥḥpy zy* ['concerning the grant of Aḥḥapi the official who' (*TAD* A6.4)
> *'l ḥylky'* … 'concerning the Cilicians…' (*TAD* A6.7)
> *'l hndrz' zy* ['concerning the construction which [' (*TAD* A6.10)
> *'l hndrz' zy* ['concerning the instruction which' (*TAD* A6.13)[97]
> *'l zy psmš*[*k 'mr l' mštm*['*n*] *ly* 'concerning (the fact that) Psamshe[k] said: "They do not ob[e]y me"' (*TAD* A6.8)

Some of the Arsames letters on parchment do not have a reference to the content of the letter (*TAD* A6.3). Others lack any external data (*TAD* A6.9 the so-called 'passport') or only have an external address (*TAD* A6.11; 6.16).[98] The two Arsames letters on papyrus found at Elephantine (*TAD* A6.1–6.2) do not bear any external data on their content.[99]

The external data on the content of the Akhvamazda letters are part of the letters themselves. These data were written down in the offices of the sender of the letter. The letters B1–9 hold no external data on their content.

6.5.4. Instruction for delivery (tables 4 and 9)

The majority of the Akhvamazda letters have a clause *hyty 'grt' z'* / *'grt' z' hyty* added to the end of the external data (*hyty 'grt' z'* [A1–3; A8]; *'grt' z' hyty* [A4]).[100] It is only absent from A5 and A6, though there was space enough for its addition.[101] A possible interpretation is 'bring / deliver this letter' (*af'el* imperative of the verb *'ty*; so the editors).

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96   Schwiderski 2000, 211.
97   In *TAD* A6.5 and *TAD* A6.12 the text is damaged following *'l* 'concerning'; cf. also *'l … zy… mspt* 'concerning…which…Masapata' (*TAD* A6.15).
98   Others are damaged at this point (*TAD* A6.6; 6.14).
99   *TAD* A6.2 does bear administrative information in Demotic, but this was probably added in the chancellery where the document was filed. See §6.5.1.
100 The external data of A7 have not been preserved.
101 In both letters, the top band of the parchment was not used for writing. See §6.5.

The Arsames correspondence and other official letters from the Achaemenid period lack instructions for delivery altogether, but there is a parallel in the difficult formula *'py y(w)bl / swn ybl* (or simply *swn*) in the private letters on papyrus found at Hermopolis Magna (*TAD* A2.2:18; 2.3:14; 2.4:14; 2.5:10; 2.6:10; 2.7:5; 2.1:15 simply has *swn*), dateable to the late sixth century. The most sensible translation of this clause is: 'it should be brought to Ofi (Luxor) / Syene (Aswan)'. An active interpretation of the verb form *y(w)bl* 'let him bring (it) to Ofi / Syene' – without the expression of the subject – is less likely within this context.[102] As in the Akhvamazda letters, the formula in the Hermopolis papyri is found in the external address area.

It should be noted that, in the Akhvamazda letters, the delivery instruction was written in the draft version. In the final version – the version which was sent to the addressee – the formula may have been absent (as in the Arsames letters). The Hermopolis letters were sent with the instruction, but these were private letters: there was no copy – either draft or improved – needed for filing.

Returning to the form *hyty*, it may alternatively be understood as a *hof'al* perfect sg.3m. form (passive) 'it has been brought'.[103] In that case, it would be a comment added later to confirm delivery of the letter. The fact that the letters are drafts is not necessarily a problem. After all, they may have been the draft versions filed in the chancellery (§2.1 with n.15). This interpretation is, however, unlikely for two reasons. Firstly, it can be concluded on the basis of the external data of A5 – written on one line rather than on two – that both the external address (§6.5.1) and the remaining external data were part of the original letter written in the offices of Akhvamazda. This is not only true for the date and the content summary, but also for *hyty 'grt' z' / 'grt' z' hyty*.

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102 From a formal point of view, there are several possible interpretations of *y(w)bl*: a pref. conj. sg.3m. *af'el* (active), a pref. conj. sg.3m. *uf'al*, or a pref. conj. sg.3m. (passive) (all are derived from *ybl* 'to bring'). For a discussion of the possibilities, see Folmer 1995, 221–222.

103 Assuming disagreement in gender between subject and predicate. This is not uncommon in passive constructions. See Folmer 1995, 480. The *hof'al* of *'ty* is unattested in Official Aramaic, which is unsurprising for the *hof'al* was on its way to vanishing from the Aramaic language. Nevertheless, *hof'al* forms of *'ty* are among the few *hof'al* forms that are still attested in Biblical Aramaic (Dan 3:13 *hytyw hêtāyû* [pl. 3m.] and Dan 6:18 *hytyt hêtā*yit [sg.3f.]). From a linguistic point of view, an interpretation as an active *haf'el* verb verb form ('he has brought [the letter]') is also possible, but a clause construction without an expression of the subject does not make much sense within the present context.

Secondly, I have found no indication that the handwriting of these two words is different from the handwriting found in the rest of the external data.[104]

There is no reference to the delivery of letters in letters B1–9.

Many official letters from Egypt contain additional information probably added in the chancellery where the document was received and filed. Such additional notes were often written in Demotic. They were added to the letter itself (so 'Sasobek wrote' and 'the boat' in the last line of the letter on papyrus by Arsames [*TAD* A6.2]) or in the area of the external data [on the *verso*]). In the Arsames letters on parchment, the Demotic name Ḥotepḥep was added to the external data (*ḥtpḥp* in Demotic script) in *TAD* A6.12–6.13. In *TAD* A6.12, this name was written in the blank space where the seal was attached. Letter *TAD* A6.11 bears an additional line in Demotic referring to the content of the letter (written just above the external address; the Aramaic holds no external data on the content). Such additional information in Demotic added by the receiving chancellery is also found in other official documents from Egypt.[105] Additions of this kind are not found among the Akhvamazda letters, a further hint that the Akhvamazda letters were drafts.

7. Conclusion

The Akhvamazda letters A1-8 and letters B1–9 (middle fourth century BCE) show much similarity with the letters on parchment and papyrus belonging to the Arsames correspondence found in Egypt (end fifth century BCE). At first glance, the points of agreement between the two corpora are impressive: the officials involved in the writing of the letters are the same, the epistolary style shows many similarities and thus points to a strong epistolary tradition (address *mn* PN *ʾl* PN; *wkʿt*; the use of the wish of well-being *šlm wšrrt šgyʾ hwšrt lk*; the way the parchment was written and folded; the administrative function of the external address). Particularly overwhelming are the points of agreement between the Akhvamazda letters and the Arsames letter orders on parchment. All these similarities contribute to the image of a well-organized system of chancelleries working to produce official documents in a uniform way across the empire. This amounts to an astonishing achievement considering the spatial and temporal distances between the material in question. Upon

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104 The handwriting in the external data of A1–3 and A8, however, is different from the handwriting found in the internal data (I am grateful to Gerrit van der Kooij for this information). One case in point is the form of the *shin* in the external data of A1, which is markedly different from the *shin* in the internal data.

105 The first evidence for an addition in Demotic is found in the letter of King Adon *(TAD* A1.1) (end seventh century). See also Schwiderski 2000, 206–208.

closer inspection of the material, however, many differences between the two corpora are apparent. I summarize some of the more salient preliminary results below.

External data

The external data in the Akhvamazda letters differ considerably from that found in the Arsames correspondence. The Akhvamazda letters do not include the sender in the external address.

The addressee in the external address of the Akhvamazda letters A1–8 is preceded by the Old Aramaic preposition *'l*. The use of this preposition is astonishing. It demonstrates that, in the middle of the fourth century BCE, in a remote province like Bactria, scribes were familiar with a preposition otherwise known only from letters from the western parts of the empire.

Unlike the Arsames letters on parchment, the external data in many of the Akhvamazda letters contain a date and delivery instructions (*hyty*; cf. also the Hermopolis papyri from Egypt).

In the Akhvamazda letters, the last two bands of the parchment were used for external data. In the Arsames letters, the top band was not used for this purpose. In these letters, the external data on the content of the letter were written on the same band as the external address (in smaller script; left of the external address). The top band of the Akhvamazda letters was possibly hidden when the parchment was folded (but this needs to be verified in future investigations of the parchments).

Letters B1–9 clearly differ from the Akhvamazda letters in their external address. They mention the sender in the external address, and do not hold the additional administrative information of letters A1–8.

Internal address

Letters B1–9 shed some interesting light on the address formula *mn* PN *'l* PN. On the basis of this evidence, one must conclude that the address formula *mn* PN *'l* PN does not by itself imply a difference in status between the sender and the addressee. These letters express the relative status of the correspondents in a different way. In some, the sender uses the noun *'ḥy* 'my brother' to indicate that he and the addressee share the same status. This further demonstrates the neutrality of the formula as to the relative status of the correspondents. The intrusion (?) of *'ḥy* in this address formula is so far unique within Aramaic letters. Further investigations are needed to determine whether this is a local or a late feature (under the possible influence of other letter writing traditions).

Wish of well-being

As in the Arsames letter orders, the wish *šlm wšrrt šgy' hwšrt lk* does not co-occur in any one letter with the formula PN *spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh*. It is only found in letters which possess no evidence for PN *spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh*. This wish is also found in letters B1–9 (sometimes with *'ḥy* instead of *lk*).

Officials involved in the production of letters

The Akhvamazda letters use an interesting combination of two clauses found in the Arsames letters (PN *yd' ṭ'm' znh* and PN *spr'*). The formula PN *spr' yd' ṭ'm' znh* in these letters shows that in middle fourth century BCE Bactria, the two positions were held by one person. This implies an administrative simplification to be compared with the situation reflected in the Arsames letters from the end of the fifth century. The Arsames letters indicate that the two positions were held by two distinct persons.

The positioning of the difficult PN *spr'* [wPN] *b'l ṭ'm* at the end of letter A2, in the place where one expects to find the colophon, supports the assumption that the titles *b'l ṭ'm* and *yd' ṭ'm' znh* refer to the same administrative function.

The evidence from the Akhvamazda letters contributes to our understanding of the functions of the *b'l ṭ'm* and the *spr*. The overall impression derived from the available Aramaic material is that the functions of the *b'l ṭ'm,* the *spr*, and the person who wrote the document were not clearly delimited.

As in the Arsames correspondence, the *spr* was probably not the same person as the person who wrote the document (based on differences in the handwriting).

Archiving of the documents

Naveh and Shaked are probably right to conclude that the Akhvamazda letters are drafts. They were possibly archived in the chancellery as records of outgoing mail (compare the Elamite letter orders in the Persepolis Fortification archive; Elephantine letters *TAD* A4.7–4.8 [without external data]). To the arguments given by Naveh and Shaked (the use of palimpsests; sloppy use of language[106]) may be added that there are no additions made by officials in the receiving chancellery.[107]

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106 See Naveh / Shaked 2012, 16–17, and 51.

107 At least two important aspects of the 'draft theory' remain to be investigated: (a) how to explain the presence of two other documents which make mention of Bagavant (A9–10) and (b) are there parallels for draft letters with an external address that leaves an empty space for the seal.

Just as in *TAD* A6.1 and *TAD* A6.2, the Akhvamazda letters' external data would only partially be visible when the parchment was completely folded (the external address). For obvious reasons, it cannot be ascertained how the Akhvamazda letters were filed in the receiving chancellery (the Arsames letters were probably completely folded when they were filed). The drafts do bear no clear signs of the final stage of folding. Only palimpsest A2 bears clear signs of the final phase of folding. This should be investigated further.

In most cases, it is impossible to ascertain whether variant forms found in the newly published materials represent local variants or late developments of a given feature.

It is possible to explain an archaic feature like *'l* in Aramaic documents from a relatively remote province by the high degree of mobility within the empire. A telling example is the presence of a Bactrian soldier on the island of Elephantine in southern Egypt in the fifth century. It suggests that persons from the eastern provinces could easily come into contact with epistolary traditions and Aramaic language forms more prevalent in the western provinces of the empire.